

# House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

For immediate release: Mar. 2, 2006

Ike Skelton, Ranking Member

<http://www.house.gov/hasc/democrats>

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## Port Security Must Become Priority

*WASHINGTON, DC – Today the House Armed Services Committee held a hearing on the acquisition by Dubai Ports World of a British-owned company operating terminals in six U.S. ports. Democrats have questioned the speed with which the deal received governmental approval in light of serious gaps in our nation's port security.*

“Our national ports are vital to the security of our nation. I have serious concerns about a process that would grant ownership over port operations without a full investigation to any company owned by a foreign government with past ties to terrorists. Congress must take an active role in ensuring that all questions raised by this deal can be resolved before it is allowed to go forward,” declared **Ranking Member Ike Skelton (MO)**.

“More generally, we need an evaluation process that ensures the companies operating in our ports are trustworthy and secure. The American people deserve to know that we will never allow this nation's enemies to operate in our ports,” **Skelton** said.

“The security of our ports is too important to rely on inadequately screening incoming cargo,” noted **Rep. Vic Snyder (AR)**. “We must substantially increase Coast Guard funding and focus our resources on ensuring that cargo coming from overseas is inspected before it is even loaded on ships. This is not optional, but something that deserves our full attention before a catastrophic incident demands it.”

“Port security has been grossly underfunded since 9/11,” **Skelton** continued. “In the FY07 budget request, the Administration even goes so far as to eliminate the Port Security Grant program. Now our ports are forced to compete with other critical infrastructure for valuable security grants. I am baffled by that decision.”

“When significant gaps in port security exist, why would anyone consider eliminating the single source of funding dedicated to filling them?” **Skelton** concluded.

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